

Glade would bring \$17 million in recreation options; could sink Fort Collins kayak park

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The proposed Glade Reservoir would create more than \$17 million worth of boating, fishing, camping and other recreation options annually, even as the project would significantly reduce flows of the Poudre River through Fort Collins, according to a federal analysis.

The project could also extend the rafting season on the Poudre but make the city's proposed kayak park unusable some years, according to draft Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, on the project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The kayak park is a key part of the city's plan to link Old Town and North College Avenue. The city has already spent millions of dollars to build bike trails along the Poudre.

Glade is the centerpiece of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District's plans to provide future water supplies for growing Front Range communities.

While the project would divert some Poudre flows into the new reservoir near Ted's Place along U.S. Highway 287, its impacts would be felt far downstream.

In addition to drawing water from the Poudre during years of high water, the project would change where water currently taken from the river is withdrawn. The project would reduce the Poudre's May flows in Fort Collins by 71 percent in an average year and 26 percent in August of dry years, according to the report.

"Diversion from the Poudre River would shorten the seasonal use of the proposed (kayak) course in May and July of average years," the Corps stated. "The course would not be functional in dry years with the proposed minimum design flows."

City officials on Tuesday evening declined to comment on the specifics of the analysis until they had completed their own review.

Northern Water could mitigate impacts of Glade by switching where water is taken out of the Poudre, according to the draft EIS. Take it out lower and the rafting season could be extended, according to the analysis.

Further, persuading other water users to take their water out lower than they do now could also improve flows through the city, the Corps said.

"Relocating this diversion point would allow for higher flows in the Poudre River through the city of Fort Collins, which would reduce some of the recreational impacts expected to otherwise result from the action alternatives," the Corps stated.

More than 34,500 people a year see the region through the eyes of guides who lead them down the scenic Poudre River during the approximately 100-day rafting season.

Well-educated and affluent, the rafters bring about \$3.7 million to the region in direct expenditures, such as the cost of the rafting trip itself, and \$9.4 million in overall impact, including overnight stays, meals and shopping, according to a 2006 survey for the Colorado River Outfitters Association.

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